

## Mount Vernon Road Infrastructure Improvements

### Questions and Responses

Received from Comments from the Public Information Open House – August 14, 2014

#### 1) What is the scope of the construction?

DeKalb County is embarking on an aggressive rehabilitation program to address the aging water pipelines within Dunwoody and throughout the county. Mount Vernon Road from Ashford Dunwoody to Vernon Oaks Drive will be the first of these projects to be constructed in Dunwoody. The replacement of the water main will permit the city to proceed with resurfacing Mount Vernon Road. These efforts by the county also present the city with an opportunity to construct sidewalks on the south side of Mount Vernon Road between Dunwoody Village Parkway and Vernon Oaks Drive. In an effort to streamline the sequencing of these improvements, the City of Dunwoody will be managing the construction of each of these three major tasks and has contracted with GS Construction to begin the infrastructure improvements.

In summary, the city will manage these three major tasks

- 16" Water Main Replacement (Funded by DeKalb County)
- Sidewalk Construction (Funded by the City of Dunwoody)
- Repaving Mount Vernon Road (Funded by the City of Dunwoody)

#### 2) Why doesn't the city locate the sidewalk farther away from the existing roadway to accommodate any possible future widening projects such as bicycle lanes or a center turn lane?

Widening Mount Vernon Road for bike lanes and a center turn lane is an expensive and long range project in the city's [Comprehensive Transportation Plan](#). The water main replacement project provides an opportunity to concurrently install sidewalks with minimal additional impact to adjacent residents. If the center turn lane project moves forward in the future, the cost to move sidewalk will be a small percentage of the overall project cost. In the interim the community will have benefitted from the use of the sidewalk. If the center turn lane project does not move forward, the proposed sidewalk is located so that bike lanes could be added in the future, while still maintaining a landscape buffer.

#### 3) Why are bicycle lanes being considered along Mount Vernon Road when there does not appear to be a sufficient user base?

When adequate facilities do not already exist, the existing user base is not an accurate indication of the number of potential users of such a facility. As identified in the city's Comprehensive Transportation Plan, pedestrian facilities, including bicycle lanes and sidewalks are to be installed where they are warranted to allow access for all modes of transportation. Mount Vernon Road is identified as a bike facility to provide for at least one east-west route through the city.

Beyond the benefits to improve the health, quality of life, and home values for communities where such facilities are installed, there are additional, non-bicycle related benefits to adding bike lanes. To minimize the overall width of pavement, vehicular travel lanes are slightly narrowed, which has been shown to reduce travel speeds. Furthermore, by widening the roadway, roadside obstructions are distanced farther from the travel lane, improving the sight distance for vehicles traveling around curves as well as for stopped vehicles at intersections and driveways, which also improves roadway safety. Also, the additional roadway width allows for greater maneuverability by first respondent vehicles (ambulances, fire trucks, etc.) around stopped traffic, which allows a decreased response time. In these ways, widening the roadway to include bike lanes, improves safety along the roadway.

**4) Why are the sidewalks being implemented before adding sidewalks along roadways that don't have sidewalks on either side?**

The City has published its [Sidewalk Improvement Policy](#) that outlines the basis on which sidewalk improvement projects are implemented. Sidewalk projects are scored based on the perceived need, traffic volumes, presence of existing sidewalks, location along a school route, ease of construction, etc. The result of the scoring produces a [list of projects](#) that are essentially ranked in order of priority.

For major roadways, such as Chamblee Dunwoody Road and Mount Vernon Road, the high traffic volumes warrant sidewalks on both sides of the roadway. Pedestrians must cross these roads to access the existing sidewalks. Pedestrian crossings would not address the access needs of homes located on the non-sidewalk side along the corridors, since those residents would have to walk along the grassed shoulders of the roadway to access these crossings.

There are additional factors that must also be considered before a project is implemented such as whether or not other (nonrelated) projects, such as a planned intersection improvement, would impact the funding, schedule, or overall layout of the sidewalk project. As a result, sidewalk projects are not always implemented in order based only on scoring. In the case of this section of Mount Vernon Road, it is being implemented now based on both its high score as well as due to other planned projects. In particular, the opportunity exists to implement this project in parallel with DeKalb County's water line replacement project so that interruptions to this corridor are not duplicated if these projects were implemented independently. These sidewalks will also provide connectivity to the future (2016) construction improvements at the Mt. Vernon Road/Vermack Road intersection that will include sidewalks from Vernon Oaks Drive to Corners Drive.

**5) Why not just add more crosswalks instead of adding sidewalks on both sides of the roadway?**

The unfortunate reality is that pedestrians are at risk whenever they cross the roadway. The degree of risk depends on the complexity of the vehicular and pedestrian traffic patterns and the effectiveness of enhancements provided. The risk increases along stretches of roadway where pedestrian crossings are not expected and where vehicles are moving at the posted travel speed, where the motorists are oftentimes focused on other motorists and not scanning for pedestrians. Mid-block crossings tend to provide a false sense of security for the pedestrian, potentially putting them in harm's way if they are

not assertive about their own safety. The pedestrian must wait for drivers in both directions to acknowledge them and stop or they must wait for an adequate gap in the traffic. For a road with traffic volume as high as Mount Vernon, the gaps in traffic are shorter and less frequent, making it more difficult for the pedestrian to cross. Therefore, pedestrian safety on high-traffic roadways is increased when unnecessary pedestrian crossings are eliminated by providing sidewalks on both sides of the road that offer access to crosswalks at stop conditions, such as stop signs and traffic lights.

**6) How will traffic be routed during construction?**

All efforts will be made to stage the construction in a manner that minimizes impacts to traffic. With the exception of temporary lane closures, manned by traffic control flagging crewmembers, two lanes of travel will be maintained throughout the construction process. Most of the construction will occur on weekdays, and lane closures will be limited to the hours of 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Night work is not anticipated due to the number of residences directly adjacent to the project.

**7) Will the city consider upgrading the sidewalks on the north side of Mount Vernon Road?**

Until all sidewalk segments on the sidewalk improvement list are completed, there are no plans to upgrade any of the existing facilities unless opportunities exist to upgrade them as part of another project, such as an intersection improvement. Maintenance will continue to be performed on the existing sidewalks, as required.

**8) Will the city consider implementing a streetscape project along the Mount Vernon Road corridor?**

This project will be constructed adjacent to the city's right of way. However, the City respects that this area is typically cared for by the property owner and is dedicated to maintaining the context of the existing corridor as a residential area. The design consultant has been instructed to minimize impacts to existing trees and vegetative features as allowable.

As a residential area, it would also be a challenge to impose a standardized landscape design along this section of the corridor where residents typically want to maintain the option of choosing what plantings fit within the context of their yards. This also benefits the homeowner as they are able to maintain that property to a standard they choose.

The professionally landscaped areas within Dunwoody occur typically along subdivisions or along commercial properties and are funded by the HOAs or property managers, without using City funds. Even the landscaping within the Perimeter Mall area is funded by and maintained by the Perimeter Commercial Improvement District (PCID), which is funded by local businesses.

Opportunities do exist along the residential portions of the Mount Vernon Road corridor such as along fences to rear yards, at intersections, and within pedestrian islands for similar treatments. Raised islands, suitable for low-height plantings will be incorporated at the intersections of Mount Vernon Way and Vernon Oaks Drive.

<b>9) Could the city create a survey and seek feedback through other media such as the Dunwoody Patch and Aha Connection?</b>
The City uses its own website for surveys and to collect citizen feedback. However, comments collected by media groups may also be forwarded to the City for consideration. The City welcomes public input for all of its projects throughout the lifecycle of a project. Written feedback via email or through a comment card are the preferred methods of providing comments. For those not in attendance, a comment card has been posted on the City's website. These comments are most impactful at the beginning stages of the project.
<b>10) What is the city doing to reduce the amount of traffic and delays through Dunwoody?</b>
The City has a Comprehensive Transportation Plan to guide the investment in transportation infrastructure. The plan includes a number of intersection improvement projects to reduce delays on major corridors. The City is also investing heavily in traffic signal coordination and communication technology. Providing alternative transportation options, such as this one, also helps reduce the traffic volumes. Finally, the City supports options for regional improvements such as the SR 400 and I-285 Interchange Project to relieve congestion on the interstates which will in turn benefit Dunwoody roadways.
<b>11) Why wasn't a representative from DeKalb County present to answer our questions about that project?</b>
The City would be glad to address any specific questions about the water main replacement with DeKalb County representatives.

*Updated October 8, 2014*